(c) A person who was interned in his home or externed from his district under the orders of the competent authority for six months or more.

(d) A person whose properly was confiscated or attached and sold due to participation in the national Freedom Struggle under the orders of the competent authority.

(e) A person who permanently in capacitated during firing or lathi charge.

(f) A person who lost his Government job (Central or State Government, including job in local bodies) and thus deprived means of livelihood for participation in the National Freedom Struggle.

II. *After 31.3.1982:*

No substantial changes were effected in he Scheme after 31.3.1982 except for the 'ollowing:—

(a) A person who was awarded punishment of 10 strokes of caning/flog-ging'whipping was treated as eligible for sanction of Samman Pension.

(b) In the case of SC/5T and women freedom fighters the minimum period of actual imprisonment for eligibility of pension was reduced from six months to three months.

(c) A person who was sentenced for imprisonment for six months or more, but was released prematurely on account of general amnesty and not on account of tendering apology or furnishing a bond or undertaking for good behaviour was-treated as eligible for pension.

(d) Voluntary underground suffering or self-exile, suffering for party work under the command of the party leader were treated as not eligible for grant of pension.

(e) Suffering of freedom fighters who had participated in the struggle for liberation and merger of the erst-while Nizam State of Hyderabad in 1947-48 from camps set up in the border areas was treated at par with underground suffering against executive action and recognised for the purpose of grant of Samman Pension.

(f) Members of Rani of Jhansi Regiment of the Indian National Army were considered eligible for grant of Samman Pension as it was for the first time in the history of the freedom movement that women in large numbers went into battle against the regular British Army setting an unique example of selfless sacrifice.

(b) At present no fresh application is pending from Tamil Nadu for grant of freedom fighters' pension.

Amendment of Article 356

*308. SHRI DEBABRATA BISWAS: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation from political leaders and/or various interested groups and NGOs for substantative modifcations in article 356 of the Constitution;

(b) if so, the details thereof and Gov-ernment's reaction thereto; and

(c) if not, whether Government would like to bring forward a bill, suo moto, to amend this much maligned article?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) to (c) The Government is aware of the demands for the amendment as also for the abolition of article 356 of the Constitution of India. The Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State Relations had also made a number of recommendations in order to prevent the misuse of the said article. These recommendations were discussed in the meetings of the Standing Committee of the Inter-State Council held on 15.1.997, 10.5.1997, 17.6.1997

and 8.7.1997. The matter was also discussed in the meeting of the Inter-State Council held on 17.7.1997. However, no consensus could be arrived at in these meetings. In the meeting of the Inter-State Council it was suggested by the Prime Minister that the matter should be further considered by the Standing Committee and brought before the Inter-State Council in due course. There is no pro-posal under the consideration of the Government to introduce a Bill, suo moto, to amend article 356 of the Constitution of India.

Handicrafts marketing and service extension centres

*309. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of new Handicrafts Marketing and Service Extention Centres proposed to be set up; and

(b) by when they would start functioning?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) and (b) The Government proposes to set up new Handicrafts Marketing and Service Extension Centres at Aizwal, Baroda or Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Trivendrum and Varanasi. The starting of these centres is dependent upon the receipt of all the required approvals.

Firing by Pak-Troops

*310. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether frequent, intermittent and indiscriminate firing by Pak-troops along the international borders in Kashmir and elsewhere have led to hundreds of acres of agricultural land lying uncultivated and uninhabited for years together;

(b) if so, the total estimated cultivable and residential area so lying vacant and rendered into fallow land; and

(c) what effective steps have been and are being taken to bring this area into proper use?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) and (b) Farmers are generally able to cultivate their land on the International Border at most places. However, in some areas of Jammu, there were reports of land remaining uncultivated due to firing by Pakistani troops. In order to assess the problem faced by the people in these border villages, a team of officers from the Ministry of Agriculture was sent to J&K in October 1997. The team reported that 1671 hectares of land in Jammu & Kathua Districts had remained uncultivated due to firing.

(c) Border Secruity Force deployed along International Border in J&K are providing necessary protection to the farmers in their agricultural pursuits along the international borders.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Bihar

*311. DR. JAGANNATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be plesed to state:

(a) the details of target set and achievements made under the major poverty alleviation programmes in Bihar during the last three years; and

(b) the specific steps taken to ensure fulfilment of targets in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OR RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL): (a) The major poverty alleviation programmes of the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment are (i) Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), (ii) Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), (iii) Million Wells Scheme (MWS), (iv) Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), (v) Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) and (vi) Indira Awaas yojana (IAY). The physical and financial target and achievements. Under